



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

OCT 31 2006

The Honorable Brian Schweitzer
Governor
State of Montana
Helena, Montana 59620-0801

Dear Governor Schweitzer:

This is in response to your letter of July 31, 2006, requesting a disaster designation for Big Horn County, Montana, due to losses caused by the combined effects of ongoing drought, fire, hail, excessive heat, hot winds, insects, and late freezing temperatures that occurred during the period of January 1, 2006, and continuing.

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) has reviewed the Damage Assessment Report, along with the additional information submitted by the State Executive Director, Farm Service Agency (FSA). Based on this review, USDA has determined that there were sufficient production losses to warrant a Secretarial disaster designation. Therefore, I am designating Big Horn County, Montana, as a primary natural disaster area.

In accordance with section 321(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, additional areas of your State are named as contiguous disaster counties. Those counties are:

Carbon Powder River Rosebud Treasure Yellowstone

This designation makes farm operators in both primary and contiguous counties eligible to be considered for low-interest emergency loans from FSA, provided eligibility requirements are met. FSA will consider each application on its own merit by taking into account the extent of losses, security available, and repayment ability.

Local FSA offices can provide affected farmers with further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Johanns".

Mike Johanns
Secretary